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NOTES ON SIRACH.

1. *The name Sirach.*

NOWHERE else does the name Sirach occur in Hebrew literature, Fritzsche remarks in his *Exegetical Handbook to the Apocrypha*. This word like other *hapax legomena* has suffered from erroneous interpretation. Only one explanation has so far been offered, that of Schürer, who says that the name Σιράχ is equivalent to סִירָא "shield" (*History of the Jewish People in the time of Christ*, II, 594). This interpretation is also accepted by the editor of the Hebrew fragments of Sirach (Preface, p. ix, note 3). It seems somewhat strange that a term meaning "shield" should have been employed as a proper noun. This of course is not a conclusive objection to the derivation, for there is a parallel in the name תַּחֲרַע (1 Chron. ix ; cf. viii. 35), which is certainly identical with תַּחֲרָא in Exod. xxviii. 32 and xxxix. 23. The Syriac Version (Peshita) renders in both passages סִירָא¹. This makes the interpretation of Sirach as "shield" highly problematical. For the Syriac סִירָא appears to be the accusative plural of the Greek σιρά. Payne-Smith is right in tracing the Syriac סִירָא to the Greek (Thesaurus Syriacus, col. 2619). It is, however, inconceivable that, as early as 200 B. C., a Greek appellative should have been borrowed by a Semitic tongue and used as a Jew's name. A process of this character needs time for its evolution, and the single century that elapsed since the beginning of Greek influence under Alexander the Great could not have produced such a remarkable metamorphosis. But even if one becomes familiarized with the conception that the Greek σιρά became a Jewish proper name, the difficulty still remains that during an entire epoch this proper name should only have been borne by one man. And again an entirely foreign name would certainly not have been given to a distinguished Jew like the author of this book.

I regard the word סִירָא as an abbreviation of אֲסִירָא. The Syriac version has indeed at the beginning and at the end of the Book of

¹ For typographical reasons, I transliterate the Syriac in Hebrew characters.

Sirach the words אסירא and בר אסירא. See also Payne-Smith, col. 306.

This אסירא Fritzsche (in his *Exegetical Handbook to the Apocrypha*, Introd., p. x) regards as a participle of the verb אסר, and it would mean vinctus, "bound." It would therefore be the surname of Simeon, the father of Jesus Sirach. I however see in this word more than a mere participle; it seems to me to be the Aramaic form of the Hebrew proper name אָסִיר, without vowels אסיר, in Aramaic אַסִּירָא not אַסִּירָא. The name is first met with in Exod. vi. 24 as one of Korah's children, and consequently also in the similar list in 1 Chron. vi. 7, 8, 22. In Exod. vi. 24, and Chron. vi. 7, 22, the Peshita has אַסִּיר (in verse 8 the name has dropped out of the Peshita). The form אַסִּיר is remarkable because the reduplication of the ד is omitted. The LXX, ed. van Ess, has Exod. vi. 24 Ἀσείρ (like Σειράχ), but in Chron. vi. 22, 23, 37 Ἀσῆρ. We accordingly see that אסיר was a usual name in the tribe of Levi, which harmonizes with the statement in one version that the author of the Book of Sirach was a priest.

To us a fact of far greater importance is that the name אסיר occurs during and after the Babylonian exile. In 1 Chron. iii. 17 we read ובני יכניה אסר שאלתיאל בנו, where, however, it is not quite certain whether אסר is the surname of Jechoniah or his son; the LXX takes Asir for the son of Jechoniah, in the Peshita the word is altogether missing; the Aramaic version is ambiguous. For our inquiry the circumstance that Asir in this text is one of two twin names given to the same person is of considerable importance, as will be seen further on. But even if אסיר in the period of the exile is only a twin name, its mere mention already justifies the assumption that it was not forgotten at a later period. We may confidently assert that the author of the Book of Sirach bore the name אסיר as a family inheritance. The post-exilic period shows a comparatively large proportion of names with an Aramaic tinge. It is true that only a few have come down to us, but even among these few there is a mass of Aramaic forms. See עזרא Ezra x. 30, Neh. xii. 15; עזריא Ezra x. 27; זבינא Ezra x. 43; חטיטא Ezra ii. 42, Neh. vii. 45; ציחא Ezra ii. 44, Neh. xi. 21; צחא Neh. vii. 46; חשופא Ezra ii. 44, Neh. vii. 46; נקורא Ezra ii. 48, 60, Neh. vii. 50, 62; חקופא Ezra ii. 51, Neh. vii. 53; פרורא Ezra ii. 55; פרידא Neh. vii. 57; בענא Neh. iii. 4, vii. 7; חנבא Neh. vii. 48; מחירא Neh. vii. 54; חרשא ibid.; חטיפא Neh. vii. 56; בארא 1 Chron. vii. 37; ארא ibid. vii. 38; רציא ibid. vii. 39. If, however, we should doubt the Aramaic character of the names here cited, it is undeniable that פלחא Neh. x. 25 (Hebrew פלח), or עברא (Hebrew עבר) xi. 17, are Aramaic forms.

Once it is expressly stated that the Aramaic name is used instead of the Hebrew **קליטא הוא** **יִקְלִיה** (Ezra x. 23, Neh. viii. 7, *ibid.* x. 11). In comparison with **בלני** Neh. x. 9, **בלנה** xii. 5, 18, also seems to be pure Aramaic.

Most instructive is the well-known name Ezra. In Hebrew the name reads **עזר** 1 Chron. iv. 4 *pro quo* (Gesenius, *Thesaurus*, 1840) **עזרה** verse 17. Compare **עזר** 1 Chron. xii. 10, Neh. iii. 19. This does not prove that **עזרה** is Aramaic, as it may be a doublet of **עזר**, compare **עדן**, **עדנה**; **עזר**, **עזרה** as appellatives. But the form with **א** in **עזרא** is distinctly Aramaic; compare **עקב**, Aramaic **עִקְבָּא** (Levy, *Targum-Wörterbuch*, II, 235²), **חלום**, Aramaic **חִלְמָא**, **חלם**. Ezra further illustrates the fact not rare among the Jews that the same name frequently recurs in a family. One of Ezra's descendants was Rabbi Eleazar Ben Azariah; and both names, Eleazar and Azariah, appear at the head of Ezra's genealogical tree (Ezra vii. 1, 3; see Bacher, *Agada der Tannaiten*, II, 220, note 2). Compare also Midrash Shir Hashirim, I, 10, p. 12, Ed. Grünhut. The name **אסיר**, which we meet in the tribe of Levi, has become Aramaized in the exilic and subsequent periods into **אסירא** as **עזר** into **עזרא**; cp. also **סירא** Neh. vii. 55.

If we consider how in all ages and countries proper names, and especially those of persons, are changed and abbreviated, we will not be surprised that **אסירא** should have been shortened into **סירא**. We have the same shortness in **מבית הסרים**, Eccles. iv. 13. On **בין . . . אבון** see Frankel, *Vorstudien*, 102, note *g*. A similar aphaeresis is shown by the name **אבא**, which in the Jerusalem Talmud is transformed into **בא** or **ווא**. Other names without the reduplicative dagesh are still more easily abbreviated, e. g. **לעזר** for **אֶלְעִזָּר**, **ליכנסא** for **אֶלְכַּנְסָר**. **Αλεξα* itself is an abbreviation of *Ἀλέξανδρος*. The change of the Biblical **אהרן** into the Talmudical **הרן** is noted by Steinschneider in his essay on "Arabic Names among the Jews" (*J. Q. R.*, IX, 1897, page 606); though I could not verify the reference he gives to Canticles Rabba ii. 5. In Syriac **אסירא** is found as well as **סירא**, just as **אֶלְעִזָּר** and **לעזר** in the idiom of the Jerusalem Talmud. The Greek form *Σειράχ* alone remains to be explained. Schürer justly refers to a similar phenomenon in *Ἀκελδαμιά* (Acts of the Apostles i. 19) for *ῥαββί*, but the true ground of this phenomenon was first discovered by Dalman

¹ In the LXX ix. 23 according to the numbering of the LXX: *Κῶνος, οὗτός ἐστι Καλιτάς*, the usual formula of double names (cp. *ὁς καὶ* in the Flinders-Petrie *Papyri*, ed. Mahaffy, II, 23. 15). In the Peshita there is another reading.

² Dalman, *Aramäische Dialectproben*, p. 50, writes *עִקְבָּא*.

(*Grammatik des jüdisch-Palaestinischen Aramäisch*, p. 161, note 6); he asserts that the final χ is intended to indicate that the word is undeclinable. יוֹסִי יוֹסִי Luke iii. 26 presents a similar form. For קְרִית אֲרֵבֶּעַ the LXX has Ἀρβῶχ , see *Monatsschrift*, XLII, 4, note 1. Remarkably enough, the Rabbinical literature has something similar. Haman's grandfather was, according to the Hagadath Esther iii. 1 (page 26, Ed. Buber), סִירָא ; according to Targum Sheni סִרָא (in Lagarde, *Hagiographi Chaldaice*, p. 243¹). In Josippon, chap. 15, p. 47, Warsaw, 1877, $\text{יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן שִׁירָךְ}$; *Seder Haddoroth*, Warsaw, 1878, page 138, $\text{יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן סִרָא הַנִּקְרָא בֶּן סִירָא}$; *ibid.* שִׁירָךְ (see also edition Warsaw, 1891, p. 112 b). Cp. $\text{עֲמוּסַי בֶּן סִירָךְ}$ in Azariah dei Rossi in *ימי עולם* chap. 32. These citations incidentally show how the Apocrypha, though in a foreign tongue, was sedulously studied by Rabbinical Jews. I will only mention the strange etymology in סִפְרָא מֵהִרְיָל (Warsaw, 1874), p. 85: $\text{בֶּן זֶרַע = בֶּן סִירָא}$. Compare the essay, *La nativité de Ben Sira*, by I. Levi, in *Revue des Études Juives*, XXIX, 197.

2. The Author.

Our supposition that Sirach = $\text{אֲסִירָא} = \text{אֲסִיר}$ lends probability to the assumption that Jesus Sirach was a priest, for it is under the Levites we meet the proper name אֲסִיר . That Jesus Sirach was of priestly origin is expressly stated in the *Codex Sinaiticus*, L. 27. We must carefully distinguish this statement from Syncellus' error (*Chron.*, edit. Dindorf, I, 525), that Sirach was a High Priest. The book itself exhibits noticeable partiality for the priestly clan, as Geiger correctly saw (*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, XII, 536–543; *Posthumous Writings*, III, 275–282). Hence, the name Eleazar found in Jesus Sirach's genealogical tree in the Aldine edition and in the Alexandrine Codex is not to be rejected. Herzfeld (*History of the Jewish People*, II, 75) is also inclined to attribute some importance to this reading. But his supposition that it refers to Eleazar ben Charsum is certainly untenable. On the other hand, the view that Jesus Sirach's grandfather was called Eleazar Zunz² accepts as proved. We have already remarked that the name Eleazar frequently occurs in the priestly pedigrees. Several priests of that name are known, and its occurring in the family of the priest Jesus Sirach is at least probable. We therefore assert that by Eleazar was probably meant not the grandfather but the father of Jesus Sirach. The Alexandrine Codex has in six copies Σειράχ

¹ In *Soferim*, XIII, 6, this name is missing.

² *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge*, 1st ed., p. 100, 2nd ed., p. 106; he writes *Eliezer* instead of *Eleazar*.

'Ελεάζαρ, in two copies Σειράχ 'Ελεάζαρος. See Fritzsche on L. 27, from which it would seem that Jesus' father had a double name, Sirach Eleazar, in Hebrew אלעזר אלעזר¹. The Aldine Codex has, however, Σειράχ 'Ελεάζαρου, according to which Eleazar may have been either father or grandfather of Jesus. But it must always be borne in mind that the difficult reading deserves preference over the easier reading, for the obscurity of the former is a mark of its originality, while the latter is the product of interpretation. Grätz (*Geschichte*, II, 2nd edition, p. 281, note 1) accepts the reading of the Alexandrine Code. Σειράχ 'Ελεάζαρ, side by side, without grammatical case relation, is only susceptible of one explanation: that Jesus' father had two names, Sirach and Eleazar. But this double name was not acceptable to succeeding writers. Some codices omit the second name and only retain the unusual Sirach. Others adopt the genitive form "Sirach the son of Eleazar." But the double name is original and characteristic of the entire epoch. We have spoken above of אסיר בכניה and קליה הוא קליטה. How many of such double names must have existed if the small list of those that have come down to us presents two examples².

Matathias' five sons have each a surname (1 Macc. ii. 2-5). Cp. *Babli Temurah*, 16 a, where it is said that יעבץ (1 Chron. iv. 9) was really called יהודה. Similarly the superscription at the head of the Syriac version ישוע בר שמעון אסירא should be explained. Simeon Sirach is a double name like Sirach Eleazar. But, in view of אסיר בכניה, the order of names in the Syriac version is more probable than Sirach Eleazar of the Greek codices, while on the other hand Eleazar seems, on the grounds above stated, more authentic than Simeon. Whence the latter name has been derived, has not yet been ascertained. It seems to point to a special Syriac tradition as in the forms אסירא and סירא. This statement is repeated as far as I know only in Epiphanius (*De prophetarum vitis*, Migne, *Patrol.*, Greek section, XLIII, 427), whence it is quoted in the Syriac Book דברוריתא כתבא "The Book of the Bee" in *Anecdota Oxoniensia*, Semitic Series, vol. I, part ii, page עט שבעון בר סירא מית בשינא: עט שבעון בר סירא, in the English version, page 73: "Simon the son of Sira (Sirach) died in peace in his own town." I do not know how to take it. We must complete the statement by prefixing to שמעון the name Jesus thus: ישוע שמעון בר, or the whole passage should be completed

¹ Fritzsche adds a query to 'Ελεάζαρος; but the word is quite correct, for Hebrew names are very often provided with Greek nominative endings.

² Cp. *Tosefta Gittin*, VIII, 5, p. 332 (Edition Zuckermann), וזו שני שמות. On Greek and Hebrew double names see my work, *Greek and Latin Borrowed Terms in the Talmud*, § 107.

thus: ישוע בר שמעון בר אסירא, or more correctly ישוע בר שמעון בר אסירא, in which case Simeon would correspond to the Eleazar of the Greek codices. Anyhow, it is more advisable to assume only two generations, as there is no special reason for tracing Jesus Sirach's pedigree to his grandfather. The names are taken from the appendix to the book where only father and son would be mentioned, but not a third generation, as in the genealogical register.

3. Sayings of Sirach in Rabbinic Literature.

Large as is the collection of Sirach's sayings in Rabbinical literature with which the Editors have enriched the Hebrew fragments of Sirach, a few have been omitted by them which deserve a place in their edition.

With IV, 30, *μη ἴσθι ὡς λέων ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου*, the Editors compare *ישוע בר שמעון בר אסירא* *אדם יתירה בתוך ביתו*, *T. B. Gitten*, 6 b. The author of this maxim is R. Chisdai the Amora. It is hardly a happy parallel, lacking as it does the simile of the lion. I fancy that more appropriate would be the following citation in the form of a Baraitha of R. Meir: *תניא היה ר' מאיר אומר כל המשיא בתו לעם*. *הארץ כאלו כופתה ומניחה לפני הארי*. The husband's rudeness is here compared to the lion's ferocity. Cp. also *Derech Erez Zuta*, c. 3: *ושפל רוח בפני כל האדם ולאנשי ביתך יותר מכל אדם*. *Derech Erez Zuta*, c. 3, *תחלת קלות ראש בנשים פתח לניאוף*, is a parallel to Sirach xxv. 24: *ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ἀρχὴ ἀμαρτίας*. Cp. also *Derech E. Zuta*, c. 7, *אחר אחר אשה הארי ולא אחר אשה*, with Sirach xxv. 15, *συνοικῆσαι λέοντι . . . ἢ . . . μετὰ γυναικὸς ποτηρᾶς*.

The passage in *Aboth*, I, 5: *מכאן אמרו חכמים כל המרבה שיחה עם* *האשה גורם רעה לעצמו וסופו יורש גיהנם*, was already recognized by Geiger as derived from Sirach. See the essay already referred to (*Posthumous Writings*, III, 276), quoted by the Editors of the Hebrew fragment of Sirach. The same sentence is to be found in the Syriac version of Sirach ix. 12. Cp. also *Derech Erez Rabba*, c. 1 ad finem: *לא תרבה שיחה עם האשה*. But the next sentence should not be omitted in a collection of Sirach's sayings in Rabbinical literature, for the connexion between *Babli Erubin*, 54 a, *חטוף ואכול*, and Sirach xiv. 11, has been already pointed out by Geiger (ib. p. 278 note). See also Derenbourg's *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine*, p. 50, note 1.

It is noteworthy that as in this instance a sentence, whose

¹ The same sentence occurs also in *Eliahu Rabba*, c. 25: *אין בשיריוח: לבי . . . ואח"כ אלך מן השלם הזה*.

introductory formula **מכאן אמרו חכמים** points to its antiquity, is traceable to Sirach, so it is with other sayings that bear the same characteristic heading. In the Midrash on Psalm xxii. 7, p. 184 of Buber's edition, occurs the following purely Hebraic sentence: **שנו רבותינו מתוך כעס רצון. מתוך אפילה אורה. מתוך רוגז רחמים. מתוך צרה רוחה.** Each of these phrases is then annotated. Buber *in loco* indicates three places in the *Talkut* where the passage is to be found, but its origin, he adds, he is unable to give. Introduced by the same formula are the following passages in the *Eliahu Zuta*, c. 16: **שכך שנו חכמים במשנה: אל תתן ענין בממון שאינו שלך שהן שוקעות בארץ אפילו אם הם בשערי שכן שנו חכמים במשנה אל תשמיע לאזניך דברים בטלים.** These two latter sentences are extant almost word for word in the *Derech Erez Zuta*, c. 4 (middle of the chapter), while the second of them occurs also in *T. B. Kethuboth*, 5 b. The citation from the Mishna can only refer to the tractate *Derech Erez*, which we know otherwise is called Mishna. Zunz curiously remarks (l. c., 2nd edition, 122 b) of the sentence in the *Eliahu Zuta*, "Probably from one of the lost larger Mishnas." He overlooked the fact that it is contained in *Derech Erez*. The very style of the sentences under discussion is such that they point to earlier sources. The Book of Sirach naturally suggests itself as the original. Cp. xx. 8 **ἐὺδοκία ἐν κακοῖς ἀνδρί** with **מתוך צרה רוחה** and the antitheses till verse 12. Sirach v. 8 **μη ἐπείχε ἐπὶ χρημάτων ἀδικοῖς** with **אל תתן ענין בממון שאינו שלך**, and Sirach immediately thereupon gives as the reason that such possessions have no lasting value. For **דברים בטלים** cp. vii. 14.

For xxvi. 20, where merchants are referred to, the parallel should not be **בתנרים . . .** (Fritzsche *in loco*), but *Derech Erez Zuta*, c. 10 (cp. also *Babli Pesachim*, 50 b): **שכך הבא ממדות הים**.

4. תחליף תחליף.

In the verse **תחליף תחליף תחליף תחליף**, xlvi. 8, the small word **תחליף** has created quite a small literature. The English translation implies that the Editors took the word **תחליף** as a verb in the second person, and in this they have the support of the old Latin version which renders as follows: *Qui unguis regem ad paenitentiam et prophetas facis successores post te*. The Latin translation took both halves of the verse in the second person, which is possible as, in verse 4, Elijah is apostrophized. Whether the Latin translator read **תמושה** instead of **תמושה** need therefore not be further discussed. If, however, it is questionable whether the verb in the first

half of the verse is in the second person, it is undoubtedly so in the second half. The word תחליף is probably a verb, and in the second person like תחתוך following it. As Professor Kaufmann rightly points out in the *Monatsschrift*, XLI, 338, this view is confirmed by 1 Kings xix. 16. No reliance can here be placed on the Greek and Syriac versions, as they seem to have had another text before them. The author of the Latin version's sole inaccuracy is the free rendering of נביא in the plural. The translation *successorem facere* for תחליף suits the context. It recalls the Syriac word תחלופא, the Syriac equivalent for ἀντάλλαγμα (Matt. xvi. 26), and which according to Brockelmann (*Lexicon Syriacum*, p. 131) signifies *compensatio*=*recompense*. Sirach then would say: "Thou leavest in thy place a prophet as a recompense." Though Professor Kaufmann, Professor Bacher (*JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW*, IX, 557), and recently the Editors (*ibid.*, p. 563), in contradiction to their previously expressed views, regard תחליף as a substantive, it is nevertheless much simpler to take it as a verb in xlviii. 8. In the second passage where the word occurs, it is better to take it thus, though it must be admitted that none of the ancient versions supports this view. The text refers to the judges; and the author when mentioning them appends the eulogy: יהי זכרם לברכה ושמן תחליף לבניהם "May their memory be blessed and so that thou (God) mayest leave their name as a recompense (for their virtues) to their children." If this text might be explained without reference to the verse already discussed above, it would admit of a still simpler meaning, תחליף=innovare, as in Isaiah lx. 31: כח ה' יחלפו כח, *ibid.* xli. 1; cp. Job xiv. 7, xxix. 20. "And renew their name for their children"—an excellent antithesis to the first half of the verse. The examples from Job show that תחליף by itself without כח has also the same sense. The sentence may finally also be equivalent to ושמן תחליף לבניהם, a transition from the third to the second person that need not surprise one in a work that imitates the old Hebrew literature. On the Eulogy cp. also 1 Chron. ix. 20¹ עמו ה' לפנים.

In the third passage, xlv. 17, נח צדיק נמצא תמים לעת בלה היה, תחליף, one is constrained to assume תחליף as a substantive. Here the word presents no difficulty as shown by the writers cited above. The term חלפתא which the Syriac version here uses, and to which reference is made in the glossary (Brockelmann, l. c.), also renders *compensatio*. I will only add that a word of similar formation occurs in the small fragment quoted by Nachmanides at the

¹ According to the accents עמו ה' לפנים are separate, not עמו חי. This would be the oldest example of a eulogy. Cp. Bacher, l. c., p. 553.

beginning of his Commentary on the Pentateuch from the book of Wisdom: חכמתא רבתא דשלמה. It is שולחפי which, as N. Brüll remarks in a large note (on Zunz's *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge*, 2nd edition, p. 130), should really be שוחלפא. Many Syriac and Aramaic forms derived from the root חלף are there given which are useful for the passage in Sirach. In *Ebed Jesu*, 64, שוחלפא = *variatio*, Hebrew תמורה. Cp. חליפה and תמורה in the prayer for the Eve of the Day of Atonement. The phrase עבד שוחלפא also occurs¹ (Sachau, *Inedita*, 128. 15). The talmudical saying ולא הניח תלמיד חכם שמת וליה תמורתו (see also *Eliahu Zuta*, c. 16) is quite parallel to the Sirach sentence.

The phrase לעת כלה היה תחליף would then mean: "At the time of destruction there was a change, a reward, a compensation"; but not "Noah is a recompense," for in spite of the analogy of תלמיד it is highly improbable that תחליף is used in a concrete sense; while there are many examples in support of the substantive in the abstract sense. It may be added that Nachmanides mistranslates the word שוחלפ' in the version accompanying the quotation, as can easily be seen from the context.

SAMUEL KRAUSS.

¹ Correspondence of I. Löw in Szegedin. For the name אסירא = סירא the same scholar compares אהירם = חירם; see *Revue des Études Juives*, XV, 200.